

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WASHINGTON - A delegation from the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), led by USCIRF Chair Michael Cromartie, is visiting Sudan January 10-21. The delegation is meeting with a broad range of individuals, including government officials, religious leaders, civil society representatives, and international observers, in Khartoum, Southern Sudan, and Nairobi, Kenya. The Commission's visit was agreed to by Sudan's Government of National Unity.

Since its inception in 1998, including after the signing of the Peace Agreement, USCIRF has determined that Sudan should be designated as a "country of particular concern," or CPC. The State Department has repeatedly adopted this recommendation. In the past, the Commission has identified Sudan as the world's most violent abuser of the right to freedom of religion and belief and has drawn attention to the Sudanese government's genocidal atrocities against civilian populations, including in Darfur. As a result of the government's policies of Islamization and Arabization, 2 million people, mostly non-Muslims in southern and central Sudan, died in the now-concluded North-South civil war. With the signing of comprehensive North-South peace accords during the past year, conditions for religious freedom in certain parts of the country have changed.

Sudan is in the midst of a historic transition. Among the issues the Commission will gather information on are the implementation of the human rights guarantees in the Peace Agreement and the country's Interim Constitution. The Commission will be submitting recommendations for U.S. policy toward Sudan as part of its statutory mandate.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom was created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 to monitor the status of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief abroad, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related international instruments, and to give independent policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State and the Congress.

- Michael Cromartie ,
- Felice D. Gaer ,